

CHAMPIONS FOR CHANGE

Supporting farmers and crofters to be the Champions for Change

WORDS
MAIRI
GOUGEON MSP
Minister for
Rural Affairs
and the Natural
Environment

THE Covid-19 crisis and the threat of Brexit have created the most challenging of times for us all. They have also demonstrated the vulnerability of global food supply chains and the power of localism, and reminded us why we must tackle the climate emergency and the loss of biodiversity.

We are fortunate in Scotland to have a dynamic landscape which aside from being world-renowned for its beauty also produces the food we eat. There is increasing recognition that our landscape has the potential to mitigate against climate change through its soils, peatlands and trees and hosts a wide variety of species within its eco-systems. A diverse natural environment benefits us all and the Scottish Government is determined to put our natural economy at the heart of a green recovery from the economic crisis caused by the pandemic.

Since 1990 agriculture has reduced greenhouse gas emissions by

29.4%

Scotland is world leading in the response to both the climate and biodiversity crises. Agriculture has reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 29.4 per cent since 1990 and continues to help through the planting of trees, the restoration of peatlands, and the generation of renewable energy.

Initiatives like 'Champions for Change' have a key role to play, not least in providing leadership on this vital work. With the right combination of knowledge-exchange between farming and food production, and wildlife and environmental management, people who care passionately about our landscape and countryside can learn from each other and make change happen. I hope that the participants of this programme will inspire others to make changes that will have long lasting effects.

Leadership and innovation are key to change – the Scottish Government is clear that we want farmers, crofters and land managers to be able to farm more sustainably and productively. Champions for Change complements a range of other activities we support, including the Knowledge Transfer and Innovation Fund. In July, I announced approximately £170,000 of funding for projects which are creating improved opportunities for nature, adapting to climate change and benefiting from new organic farming materials. To date, the scheme has awarded circa £6 million to a combination of 36 Knowledge Transfer and Innovation based projects that will help us to grow a sustainable, vibrant and innovative rural economy.

Farming for a Better Climate, Quality Meat Scotland's Monitor Farm programme, the Scottish Rural Leadership Programme all create opportunities for people to learn new skills, gain valuable experience and work together to identify how rural Scotland can adapt and reform to help tackle the climate emergency and better protect and restore our biodiversity. There is no silver bullet, no one solution for everyone, but there is scope across the

£170,000

of funding for projects creating improved opportunities for nature, adapting to climate change and benefiting from new organic farming materials.

“Leadership and innovation are key to change – the Scottish Government is clear that we want farmers, crofters and land managers to be able to farm more sustainably and productively”

Mairi Gougeon
MSP, Minister
for Rural Affairs
and the Natural
Environment

board to make changes and improvements – whether that be in soil and nutrient management, animal health and welfare, increases in productivity efficiencies or the adoption of organic farming practices.

Within my role, I have been lucky enough to have the opportunity to visit with, speak to and see first-hand how farmers and crofters are already championing change. We have already achieved a lot but there is still much more to be done. Farmers, crofters, food producers and land managers can help us pick up the pace of change to cut emissions faster and further. That is why we need

individuals to take leadership and create a pathway to sustainable land management that helps to mitigate the global effects of climate change and encourages biodiversity to flourish in Scotland.

I believe that by innovating, demonstrating leadership, working together and sharing our ideas and knowledge through initiatives like ‘Champions for Change’, we can meet the challenges in front of us. ♦

£6 million

awarded to a combination of 36 Knowledge Transfer and Innovation based projects.